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ABSTRACT

Extensive public concern about the deficiency in basic skills confirmed by a decline in standardized test scores and widespread implementation of a variety of state and local improvement programs indicates an urgent need for national attention to this timely issue. However, a federal testing program or federally-imposed performance standards are neither necessary or desirable. Federally sponsored tests are not necessary because there are already a number of tests in widespread use; furthermore, cultural bias is a false issue regarding most existing tests and is not a valid argument either for or against a national test. The federal government should instead support a decentralized effort by developing models of what can be done and how, to avoid redundancy in state and local efforts. Specifics include: defining basic skills, setting standards, test selection and reporting results, program development, and teacher training. The government should also take initiative in providing test comparability information, establishing a clearinghouse on basic skills activities and designing a system to monitor progress achieving basic skills at a minimum competency level is only a starting point--the goal of our educational system is excellence. A status report on basic skills activities at the federal, state and local level, and sample basic skills test items are appended. (CP)

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ORAL SUMMARY
(Revised)

STATEMENT BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ARTS, AND HUMANITIES

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

U. S. SENATE

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PROFICIENCY IN BASIC SKILLS

July 27, 1977
WASHINGTON, D.C.

William W. Turnbull, President
Educational Testing Service
Princeton, N.J.

TM007 375

Mr. Chairman:

In response to your invitation, I have prepared a statement, with various attachments, on the subject of attaining and surpassing minimum standards of proficiency in the basic skills. The statement is before you in written form. I can summarize the main points briefly, and will of course be glad to amplify or discuss any aspects of the topic you may wish.

In my opinion, this is a time when it is important to devote national attention--Federal attention--to basic skills, defined as reading, writing and mathematics. The timeliness derives in part from the evidence which suggests that those skills have declined among young people in recent years. Even had they not declined as far as the average student is concerned, it is clear that too many students are sadly lacking in the tools for further learning and for full participation in American society.

People in and out of the educational community have been painfully aware of the deficiency and we now see a remarkable upsurge in efforts to do something about it. In my fuller remarks I have detailed a sampling of those efforts at state and local levels, and further references are provided to the astonishing variety of efforts at improvement across the country.

In this climate, there is an opportunity and a need for educational leadership at the national level if the disparate efforts are to be given focus and substance, if they are to be provided the intellectual and developmental resources to be effective and to avoid needless duplication of effort. But above all, we should recognize and build on the enthusiasm and the good initiatives to be found around the country.

I believe it is important that state and local districts set standards, expressed in real-life terms, detailing the basic competencies that students need to attain. It is important also that they test the attainments of their students and measure the results against those standards.

For reasons I have outlined, I don't believe a Federal testing program in the basic skills is either necessary or desirable. I do not believe that federally-imposed performance standards, to be applied uniformly across the country, are required. Nor do I believe we need a new, federally-sponsored, set of tests of the basic skills: there are many good ones already.

It has been suggested that the thorny issue of "cultural bias" makes it inappropriate to use the same test of basic skills with students from varied economic, social and ethnic backgrounds. This is, I think, a false issue where most existing tests are concerned and is not a valid argument either for or against a new national test. The reasons are outlined in my full statement.

Turning to what a Federal role might usefully encompass in supporting a decentralized effort: I would advocate a visible program, with Federal support, based on new legislation if necessary, to do centrally those things that it would be redundant and inefficient to do over and over in separate state and local efforts. These things include a wide range of activities to define the elements of sound and workable programs, and in particular to make explicit the skills to be measured; to show how standards can be set in relation to levels of performance; to describe how results can be reported to teachers, students, parents, school boards, and the public; and to provide the basis for comparing results between and among programs that use different tests. The Federal role should be, further, to provide a clearinghouse of information for states and districts with regard to programs underway or proposed; to assess the nation's progress in the basic skills over time, and to encourage the improvement of instruction, or the development of new approaches to instruction which will address whatever deficiencies are found. We need not only to define standards of performance but also to discover and promulgate the means to help teachers help students achieve those standards.

Finally, I have been explicit about a warning we probably have to keep repeating: that acquisition of basic skills, and especially minimum competencies, is a necessary preparation for education but far from a sufficient goal in either breadth or depth. A Federal initiative that keeps that fact before educators and the public would, I believe, serve the country well by rallying the best efforts of our disparate system. There are not many times when people seem so ready to move in pursuit of a shared educational purpose.

Mr. Chairman:

It is a privilege to discuss with you the important and difficult questions of basic skills, minimum standards in education, and the role that Federal initiatives might play in ensuring that people in the United States are equipped with the competencies they need to function successfully in this society.

A. There is a need for national attention to basic skills

Perhaps the first question to be asked is whether or not there is a problem. Is there a need for national attention to the basic skills and the extent to which students are attaining them?

The answer, I believe, is "Yes." There is no doubt that there are substantial numbers of students who pass through and graduate from our secondary schools today without the skills in reading, writing, and mathematics that they need both as a basis for further learning in all subjects and as prerequisites for participating fully in the responsibilities, opportunities and rewards that are integral to life in this country.

B. There has been a decline in basic skills

The belief is widespread that the situation now is significantly worse than it was a generation ago: that the numbers of students whose skills fall below any reasonable standard of adequacy is now substantially greater.

The data on this point, although not all pointing in the same direction, tend to support the view that there has been a decline in skills. In one sense, the fact of a decline is not the main issue, since if there are too many people who lack essential skills we have a serious national problem regardless of the trend. But if we are losing ground, as many think we are, we had better know it and do something about it.

A widely reported assertion is that average scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test of the College Board, taken near the end of secondary school, have been going down since 1963. The reports are correct; the scores have declined. In 13 years to 1976, the SAT-Verbal Score made by the average student taking the test had gone down some 50 points, from 478 to 429, and the SAT-Mathematics score for the average student had declined by about 30 points, from 502 to 470. The reasons for the change are still under study by a distinguished panel, chaired by Willard Wirtz, that expects to report in another month. Meanwhile, the fact of the decline has been interpreted by many people as evidence that the schools are no longer doing as good a job as they did in the early sixties.

It is important to recognize that the SAT itself is not a test of basic skills but rather of much more advanced academic ability. Moreover, the SAT results should not be taken as a measure of the quality of the schools. The test is intended to reflect abilities developed in a variety of settings, in and out of school, rather than to mirror the adequacy of the teaching and the courses of study in secondary school. Moreover, the ranks of the SAT-takers increased greatly over the period and some part of the decline no doubt reflects the fact that the young people taking it today include many who would not have applied to college 15 years ago. Nonetheless, the decline in scores may reflect, in part, school-related changes, and in any case it is a challenging piece of information demanding attention. It is

generally consistent with results drawn from a variety of other national or regional exams that show a downward drift in performance levels in recent years at the high school level. The declines are less in the earlier grades, and in fact in the first three or four years of school the attainment of pupils appears to be substantially the same as before.

Nonetheless, the evidence is convincing that in the upper grades there is a large enough number of students with deficiencies in the basic skills to constitute a serious problem. And the number is probably growing.

C. There is widespread public concern

As is not unusual, thoughtful people around the country, including many educators, had been personally convinced for some time before the formal evidence was in hand that the problem was real: the statistical evidence is confirming a popular consensus already reached.

The reaction to the problem has, indeed, been remarkable. There is a ferment and an impulse to action of a breadth and intensity seldom seen in education. It owes its force both to educators and to the general public, is reflected in the media, and finds expression in demands for legislation, often to require some form of test in the basic skills.

D. States and local school districts are taking action

Illustrative facts are emerging steadily:

-- Forty-nine states are planning, now debating, or have enacted resolutions or legislation on testing for competency or proficiency. Since January of this year alone, 23 states have introduced legislation. And California, Florida, New York, and Oregon have begun this year to implement their programs.

-- A recent task force of the National Association of Secondary School Principals called for the establishment of competency requirements for high school graduation in communication skills, mathematics, and American history.

-- The National School Boards Association polled its members and found more than 75 percent believed schools should concentrate more heavily on the three basic skills areas.

-- Gallup's latest annual poll of attitudes toward the public schools showed that 65 percent of the American public now believe all high school students should be required to pass a nationwide examination prior to high school graduation. In 1958, just after Sputnik, only 50 percent of the public expressed support for such an exam.

-- The report on competency testing by the National Commission on Education Statistics was based on an August 1976 survey conducted for the National Institute of Education. At that time, five states -- accounting for 25 percent of the nation's public school enrollment -- had competency-based testing programs in operation. An additional 24 states were then involved in some form of performance-based educational activities with emphasis on basic skills. Three more have since become involved. In total, the report stated more than 67 percent of the total public school enrollment in the United States is already involved in basic skills testing in one form or another.

At the local level, the following examples could be multiplied many times over to obtain a total picture:

-- In Denver, Colorado, a set of minimum competency tests for high school graduation has been administered since 1962. The tests cover reading, spelling, math, and language mechanics. Remedial instruction is provided for those who do not pass the tests. The state itself has not mandated a test, but rather has set guidelines for the kind of test that should be used for districts that want to implement a program.

-- Beginning in June, 1979, the Los Angeles Unified School District will require its graduating seniors to pass the Senior High Assessment of Reading Proficiency (SHARP) test in order to receive a diploma. Students will have up to four opportunities to pass the test. Remedial instruction will be provided.

-- In Duval County, Florida, a program testing for functional literacy began with ninth grade students during this last academic year.

-- The Gary, Indiana, School System, as one of its system-wide proficiency examinations in the basic skills of reading, writing, math, and oral communication, last fall had all ninth grade students write individual essays. These were centrally graded by teachers in the system under arrangements designed to insure comparability of the standards applied.

In short, the models for coping with this educational problem appear to be almost as many and varied as the localities and levels of government in which they are being developed. Those local perceptions that have helped create a wide variety of approaches to educational issues and problems continue to lead to a broad array of methods to evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe. An ETS report, Basic Skills Assessment Around the Nation, provides a brief review of activities in states and local districts in this area as of early this year. An update to this report, prepared this week by the ETS Information Division, is also appended.

Clearly, then, the issue of basic skills both deserves and is receiving urgent attention across the country. In this circumstance, is there any need for Federal involvement?

E. Federal involvement can help

I believe the answer is that Federal action is needed. The question is what form it should take.

The surge of local and state interest in children's education is an asset of enormous value. We are seeing a genuine grass-roots movement. The public has identified what it sees as a critical educational issue, and it is right. If the energy and the desire for improvement now apparent can be given point and focus, and if the means of translating it into intelligent action can be provided, the movement could mark a turning point of major significance in education.

The principal need at the Federal level is, I believe, educational leadership in delineating constructive alternative solutions: models of what can be done and how. The second need is to do some of the research and to develop some of the techniques that will be needed for effective action. The third need is the channeling of some funds, new or already appropriated, toward this set of problems. In short, there is an opportunity to capitalize on the enthusiasm and ideas already present and to make available the resources that can be drawn upon to help make the efforts effective.

F. A Federal testing program is not needed now

Present conditions also suggest that Federal moves that are indeed possible might be largely redundant and at worst counter-productive. There is, for example, no evident need for a campaign to raise public awareness: it has been raised. There is no apparent need for the creation of a Federal program of testing for minimum competencies: there is already an array of such programs in place or now being installed, with some variety that will accommodate to the differences in emphasis favored in different parts of the country. Superimposing a national system, even a voluntary one, on a scene of vigorous local and state initiatives already underway, would run the risk of dulling the sense of immediate, close-at-hand need for cooperative self-help that is powering the present movement. It would also raise, unnecessarily, sensitive questions about the "intrusion" of Federal influence in State and local prerogatives.

The most difficult task in any program of testing for competency is setting the level of accomplishment that will be judged "adequate." While there is wide agreement in the educational community and among members of the general public that reading, writing, and mathematics are essential to the educational process, there is no consensus on the questions "How much, for whom, where, and when?" It seems doubtful that these questions are best answered by Federal intervention or fiat.

In order to implement a Federal standard or system of standards, it might be deemed necessary to have an extensive support apparatus with provisions for the development of new test forms, and perhaps for the maintenance of security on existing forms. The impact of such a system on the education community could be highly negative. A single national standard also has the potential for leading to labels ("skilled" or "unskilled") on

diplomas, and perhaps on people, without the application of a set of teaching methods and resources aimed at giving the individual student -- by teaching, textbooks, and time -- the competencies that he or she lacked when the test was taken. The latter responsibilities, of course, rest with the states and localities.

A Federal role in describing a valid standard-setting process for states and local districts could, however, be distinctly helpful - a point I return to in Section H.

G. Specially developed tests are not needed

If there is no need for a national testing program, may there still be a need for a new set of tests developed under Federal auspices? I believe this is not the case. There is an ample supply of tests, their diversity is a great strength in a pluralistic system, and their quality on the whole is good. In particular, I see no prospect that the problem of "cultural bias" would be ameliorated by a Federal effort. Two of these points are expanded below.

1. There are many tests already in widespread use

Test publishers, both profit-making and not-for-profit, have been active in meeting the demand for tests of basic skills, often accompanied by material to test a broader array of educational attainments. The tests have been in particular demand for evaluating programs funded under Title I of ESEA. The U. S. Office of Education has sponsored a summary of the content of eight commonly used, nationally normed tests, and the Region V Technical Assistance Center, administered by ETS, has recently issued a one-page overview (attached) of those tests and the latest developments with regard to each.

There is a problem posed by lack of comparability among the scores reported for the several tests, which use somewhat different score reporting systems. Federal assistance in providing comparability, which is technically feasible, would be distinctly useful.

2. Cultural factors would not be eliminated by a national test

It is my understanding that the question of the influence of cultural factors on test scores may be of particular interest to the Subcommittee, and properly so, because of the importance of this matter in any consideration of national policy. Accordingly, I shall treat the question at somewhat greater length than might otherwise seem necessary. It is well documented that on the average, various cultural and other groups score less well on tests of school subjects, including basic skills, than do white middle-class

students. The lower-scoring groups include some ethnic minorities, children of the poor, children for whom English is a second language, and persons with combinations of these and other background conditions. In this context the question that must arise is whether the lower average scores are attributable to bias in the tests themselves. Much research has been devoted to this question -- and to important related concerns-- in recent years.

Over many decades people have tried to devise "culture free" or "culturally fair" tests (for instance, by using problems posed entirely in pictures) in the hope of reducing the differences in performance between groups. The results have been discouraging in two main respects:

a. the scores from the specially designed tests have proved to be less relevant to educational attainment than those obtained from conventional tests, and

b. the new tests have shown score differences between groups as great as the differences on the tests they were designed to replace.

It would appear that cultural factors permeate the exercise of the intellect to a much greater degree than had been assumed by those who hoped that changes in content, format, or mode of presentation would wipe them out.

At the opposite extreme would stand tests developed without attention to cultural bias, which could thus include questions particularly dependent on familiarity with a particular culture, although such familiarity is irrelevant to the particular educational skills being tested. These might be called "culture-saturated" questions. For many present-day tests in wide use, both editorial and statistical steps have been taken to reduce or elimirate such questions.

It is common practice in test editing to arrange for critical review of individual questions by minority-group members, and to eliminate or revise any material found objectionable, or depending on knowledge specific to a particular culture.

Another check is provided by the statistical procedure called "item analysis," which means analyzing the way a question performs in the context of an actual examination. Item analysis is a procedure in which the answers chosen by various subgroups of students are analyzed to make sure the question is as easy, or as difficult, as those who wrote it felt it would be. Item analysis is generally first applied when questions are pretested (included in an actual examination, but not counted as part of the final score). As part of the item analysis a check is made to discover questions that prove unusually difficult for minority students. Such questions are typically eliminated.

In these ways, questions representing the kind of "cultural bias" that concerns most people--"culture saturated" questions--are minimized.

Two further kinds of "cultural bias" remain in most tests, however. One stems from the fact that questions on all widely used tests are phrased in standard English. This may be called "basic language bias." A student whose experience has been gained in a different idiom can be expected to be less at home with a test in standard English, and to do less well on such a test than a student of comparable basic ability who has grown up with standard English as the medium of expression. This reality is especially important for students from families where a language other than standard English is spoken.

To charges that basic language "bias" exists in most tests, the answer must be, "Yes, it does." Tests of basic skills measure the ability of students to read standard English, to write it, and to perform the calculations required to solve problems posed in standard English.

It is of course quite possible to develop and give tests in the student's first language. This is now done in many areas, such as the Southwest, and the process can produce useful information about a student's ability to cope when problems are posed in that language. But it must be remembered that the student's ability to solve word and number problems posed in the language of the majority culture is of legitimate concern, since it shows whether or not she or he is able to cope at a minimum competency level when problems are posed in English. This is an important prerequisite either for using basic skills as essential tools in further learning or for applying them to successful adult living in the United States.

The third kind of bias is "bias of opportunity." It is a fact that students in this country do not yet have an equal opportunity to learn. They may have gone to more or less effective schools, with more or less well-trained teachers, with greater or lesser opportunity at home to expand their knowledge. Opportunity is not yet equalized across all subgroups of the population. Such "bias of opportunity" shows up in performance on standardized tests.

Two possible approaches have been proposed in these circumstances. One would be to try somehow to give extra points on the tests to students who had learned under adverse circumstances, so that a score would be adjusted according to the educational handicaps overcome by the student. Though this proposition has been given considerable thought, and has had some research devoted to it, no one yet knows how to do it. Moreover, there is a responsible body of opinion to the effect that applying a variable yardstick would be more confusing than helpful.

The other approach is to say, "The test score tells you how well the student has mastered the skill in question. It does not tell you the obstacles he or she has overcome to attain that degree of proficiency." If one is concerned with helping students develop a level of skill necessary to get along in our complex society, it is important to be able to measure attainment separately from the question of how the learning was or was not acquired. When it is found that a student needs help to bring a particular skill to at least a minimum level, the educational job is to provide the instruction required.

I have attached some sample test questions like those now included in tests specifically designed to measure basic skills. These materials have been reviewed for minority bias and would probably be judged as unbiased by most reviewers.

H. Federal help of specific kinds is needed to allow a decentralized system to work well

Having indicated that I do not believe that certain Federal actions would be helpful, although they have been put forward cogently by others, I would like to return to the view expressed in Section F -- that Federal involvement can help -- and propose several more specific actions for your consideration.

1. An affirmative declaration by the Congress and the Administration that the issue of basic skills is of national importance, is one in which the public interest is strong and is an area to which Federal actions should be devoted in support of State and local efforts.

2. The provision of funds for Federal help through the appropriate agencies within HEW and through additional appropriations to be distributed on a state basis.

The help to be provided through USOE or NIE should be designed in close consultation with the people who are trying to solve the problem at state and local levels. In general, it should concentrate on those things that should, for efficiency, be done centrally as a service to all states rather than invented anew by each. Specifics might include:

- developing models of successful ways in which people have already approached tasks such as

    - defining the basic skill areas of concern and the elements within the broad areas,

    - deciding on the educational levels at which to test, including adult,

    - deciding how to select, from among the available tests, those best suited to state or local needs,

  - ° reporting results to teachers, students, parents, school boards, the public. (This might include relating standards of performance on the tests to real-life objectives of coping at various levels of adequacy in American society.),
  - ° devising techniques that can be used in setting minimum standards for a community or state,
  - ° developing teaching and learning programs to bring basic skills at least to minimum acceptable standards, and integrating them into the educational structure of a school district, and
  - ° devising ways to provide training for teachers, aides and others who will help students learn basic skills.

- providing information to allow results from different tests to be expressed in comparable terms, to allow the information to be brought together for larger units (e.g. states, regions, the nation) and to minimize the likelihood that redundant testing will be required. A successful effort ("Anchor Test Study") was undertaken in reading at the elementary level a few years ago.

- providing a clearinghouse of information about activities in progress around the country.

- designing a system to monitor progress nationally, overtime, in overcoming problems in the area of basic skills, and to identify and encourage those practices that are most effective.

The last point deserves emphasis because of course the uncovering of deficiencies in basic skills is a means, not an end. The end is provision of skills at the requisite level. For this reason, the aim should be to diagnose the learning problems, not to point the finger of blame; to design effective teaching and learning methods, not simply to keep score. It will be important that the Federal role be conceived, presented, and understood not as a concentration on passing or failing, winning or losing, but on fostering essential learning.

I. Basic skills training is not enough

It seems self-evident, perhaps, that acquiring the basic skills at a minimum competency level is the start of the pathway to learning, not its end. It would be tragic if anyone were to conceive of minimum competencies as being sufficient in the root skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. The goal of our educational system is excellence. Each individual should be encouraged to progress in those fields to the highest level of proficiency of which he or she is capable. Nor must the three primary skill areas, important though they are, be allowed to shoulder aside the very learning that the acquisition of those skills makes possible in the sciences, the arts, the collective wisdom of our civilization. We will all

be well served if the Federal government can find ways to strengthen the basics without implying that the country is ready to settle for minimum performance or a narrowed conception of our aspirations for learning.

If the Federal government puts its efforts fully behind the commitment to put a foundation of basic skills under the learning of every student in the country, I have no doubt that in the present climate of national concern among educators and the public at large, the leadership in the states and districts will be eager to enter into a constructive partnership to bring about that level of performance.

An ETS Information Report:

BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT AROUND THE NATION
(Interim Update)

In February, 1977, Educational Testing Service compiled and published a comprehensive report on various federal, state, and local school district activities relating to minimum standards and basic skills assessment. The information contained in this packet is an interim update of that report. A complete revised issue of Basic Skills Assessment Around the Nation will be published in September, 1977.

This update describes activities that are very much part of a continuing process, subject to change and modification. Legislation indicated as being in committee may not have been reported out or may still be pending. In other cases it may have been signed into law. With that caution, the information in this report should prove useful as an indication of the broad range and variety of activities related to basic skills occurring at the state and local level across the nation.

ETS Information Division, which compiled this report, acknowledges the provision of invaluable data by Chris Pipho of the Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colorado.

Activities at the Federal Level

1. HR 6088, introduced by Ronald L. Mottl in April 1977, would require State educational agencies to "establish basic standards of educational proficiency applicable to secondary school students." Students would be required to pass a proficiency examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic in order to graduate. The bill would also establish a National Commission on Basic Education, representing state and local education, with authority to review and approve plans submitted by state educational agencies for the establishment of specific standards.

2. Assistant Secretary for Education, Mary Berry, on July 14 recommended that her office and the National Institute of Education develop a voluntary standardized national basic skills competency test, measuring reading, writing and arithmetic at various grade levels. The new recommendation was made at a hearing before the Senate education subcommittee, where Senator Claiborne Pell and Admiral Hyman Rickover both expressed strong support of a national standardized test. Rickover has for many years advocated a national test to measure specific minimum competency requirements for various grade levels starting in the early elementary grades. Berry expressed concern, however, that problems connected with such a test exist and must be dealt with.

Activities at the State and Local District Level

ALABAMA

SB 79 would require local school boards to develop, by June 1978, standards of proficiency to evaluate student progress in the performance of academic and basic skills. The state department of education would assist local boards of education in developing examples of minimal academic standards for graduation including performance indicators. After June 1980, students would be required to demonstrate proficiency in the basic skills in order to graduate. The bill will be considered in the next legislative session.

ALASKA

Local District
Craig Alternative School is conducting minimal competency activities. North Slope, Galena, Adak, and Southwest Region School Districts are working on designing competency-based curricula.

ARIZONA

As of January 1, 1976, the state board of education required school districts to certify that 8th grade graduating students are able to read, write, and compute at the 6th grade level. Students graduating from high school must demonstrate proficiency in those skills at the 9th grade level.

H2160 would require the state school superintendent and the state board of education to develop a statewide standard testing program for grades 1-12. The results of the tests would be correlated to individual pupils' class sizes, teachers, teachers' experience and salaries. The state board of education would also be mandated to divide class time of 2nd - 6th grades into specific "verbal and quantitative segments."

CALIFORNIA

The California High School Proficiency Test, covering the basic skills of reading, math and computation skills, and consumer economics, is administered to 16- and 17-year-olds. Those who pass receive a proficiency certificate legally equivalent to a high school diploma and may leave high school with parent permission. The test is administered three times a year. In 1976, SB 1502, Ch. 315, opened the California High School Proficiency Examinations to any persons 16 years of age or over, or to anyone who has been enrolled in the 10th grade for one or more academic years.

School districts that operate high schools are required to adopt assessable graduation standards of proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, and computation by June 1978, and to assess student progress toward these standards once during grade 7 through 9 and twice between grades 10 and 11. (AB 3408, September 1976.)

CALIFORNIA (cont'd)

AB 357 would require elementary school districts by June 1, 1979, to adopt standards of proficiency in the basic skills. This bill would have students tested at least twice during the fourth through sixth grades and at least once from sixth through eighth grades. Conferences between pupil/parent/principal/teachers would be required if the pupil falls short of the standards.

The district must provide, for those students who do not meet district standards, a diagnostic and prescriptive remedial instruction conference or alternative ways of satisfying the district's course of study. After June 1980, students who do not meet these standards will not receive a high school diploma.

Local District

Los Angeles. Beginning in June of 1979, the Los Angeles Unified School District will require its graduating seniors to pass the Senior High Assessment of Reading Proficiency (SHARP) test in order to receive a diploma. Students will have up to four opportunities to pass the test; remedial instruction will be provided. Announcement of the SHARP test by the district has generated considerable interest by other districts.

COLORADO

No special proficiency testing is required by the state beyond regular requirements for graduation from the 12th grade. Local school districts are free to impose such tests, but must fulfill certain conditions if they choose to do so.

Local District

The Denver Public Schools administer their own minimum competency tests for high school graduation, have done so since 1962. The tests cover reading, spelling, math, and language mechanics. Remedial instruction is provided for those who do not pass the tests.

CONNECTICUT

A Statewide Advisory Committee for Proficiency Testing appointed by the state department of education is studying recommendations on developing a high school equivalent competency-based certificate. A final report to the board focused primarily on equivalency testing involving the possible use of the APL (Texas) and the GED measures. The committee will continue for a year's time.

DELAWARE

The state department of education is developing a list of general competencies to be used as a prerequisite for high school graduation, as required by the state board of education in its resolution of December 1976. Some exploratory work is being done, using the Adult Performance Level materials. The department of education expects that it will have a plan for competency based education for 9th grade.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

A competency-based curriculum has been developed by the superintendent and approved by the board in October 1976. The program includes pre- and post-testing at each grade level. Newly revised board of education rules specify satisfactory achievement of competency at the required skill level for grade promotion.

FLORIDA

CSSB 107 (1976) mandates competency requirements based on mastery of basic skills and functional literacy. Programs of pupil progression based upon performance are required as of July 1, 1977, tied to local goals and objectives. Performance in basic skills will be stressed (on statewide tests) before students may progress from grades 3, 5, 8, and 11.

By the 1978-79 school year, school districts must establish standards for high school graduation, to include mastery of basic skills and satisfactory performance in functional literacy, in addition to the number of credits required by the district school board. Each district is required to provide remediation for students needing it. Alternative diplomas must be awarded to those students unable to meet the standards prescribed.

HB 203 would permit school districts to conduct dismissal hearings for instructional personnel for failure to teach students to reach state minimum performance standards.

Local Districts

Duval County, Jacksonville. High school seniors will take a test of functional literacy.

West Palm Beach. The school board requires all high school juniors to take the Adult Performance Level test. Satisfactory performance on this test will become a graduation requirement, beginning with the class of 1978.

Broward County, Polk County. Both counties are developing K-12 performance standards.

GEORGIA

The state department of education has a statewide criterion-referenced testing program for the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. The tests, which are diagnostic, provide an individual profile in 20 basic skill areas. The state board of education is investigating the possibility of changing high school graduation requirements to include minimal proficiency standards for the life role skills, including specific recommendations for the student as the learner, the individual, the citizen, the consumer, and the producer. The recommendations are modeled after the Oregon high school graduation requirements. At the request of the state board, the department of education is conducting a major redesign of the Georgia School Standards, the first such major overhaul since the Standards were first administered.

Local District.

Clarke County School District will require proficiency in the basic skills to graduate, beginning with the graduating class of 1980. The school district is exploring the use of a minimum competency requirement for grade-to-grade promotion.

HAWAII

Local District

The Kamehameha Schools (private) are conducting a curricular revision study that will investigate minimal competency structures and their influence on actual instructional programs.

IDAHO

The Idaho State Board of Education adopted new graduation requirements, in February 1977, and a proficiency program, optional to school districts, that measures competency in reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling prior to high school graduation. Participating districts will be required to give the test beginning in the ninth grade and to provide remedial work for those students who do not pass. Students in participating districts will graduate with a diploma bearing the state board of education seal. Other students will receive certificates of attendance or a plain diploma.

ILLINOIS

The department of education is exploring the use of some form of minimum competency testing in basic skills and is considering developing a bank of objectives and items for use by school districts.

HB 1364 would require the successful passage of reading, writing and mathematics proficiency tests as a condition for high school graduation.

Local Districts

Chicago. The Board of Education is moving toward setting standards for high school graduation. Pilot examinations have been prepared and administered. A study is being done to determine an effective functioning level, involving young adults performing satisfactorily on the job, as a validation effort.

Peoria Public School District is developing a minimum competency examination for high school graduation, beginning with the graduating class of 1979.

INDIANA

Local District

Gary. The board of education has adopted proficiency standards for high school graduation, effective in 1977. Proficiency in the basic skills of writing, reading, math, and oral communication will be required. In the fall of 1976 and in June 1977, Gary high school students wrote essays for the purpose of identifying students needing remedial help in writing. Centralized scoring of these examinations was conducted by Gary teachers with the assistance of Educational Testing Service.

IOWA

SF 252 would require all students to pass tests in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to graduate. The program would begin in July 1980.

Local District

Metro High School, Cedar Rapids, is involved in minimal competency activity.

KANSAS

HB 2139 would require local boards of education to adopt standards and prescribe an examination for proficiency in the basic educational skills. After June 30, 1981, the state board of education would certify that high school graduates have met the state "basic educational skills" standards. Students not meeting the standards will be certified as having completed attendance in a four-year course of study.

Prior to July 1, 1978, the state board of education, in cooperation with the state board of regents, would determine and establish standards of proficiency in academic skills (also a standardized examination) for students preparing for admission to state colleges and universities.

SB 268. The state board of education would be required, prior to July of 1978, to adopt standards of proficiency in the basic skills for graduation from high school. The state would prescribe a standardized examination and set standards of proficiency; local boards would administer the test and certify to the state those students passing the test. The proficiency examination would be administered twice each year.

KENTUCKY

Interest has been expressed in minimal competency in basic skills as a requirement for high school graduation. The State Board of Education has instructed the State Department of Education to make a study of competency based education and minimal requirements for high school graduation. The use of the GED test for high school equivalency is being investigated.

LOUISIANA

The State Board of Education will include, at the request of the State Department of Education, a study of minimal competency testing within the development of a state master plan for education.

MAINE

Legislative document #1810, an act to establish assessment of student performance in the basic skills, directs the Commissioner of education to study the whole question of basic competency testing. The Commissioner will administer a basic competency test to all high school juniors in the fall of 1977. The Commissioner is directed to prepare appropriate assessment materials. A citizens' committee will study the question, review the procedures and will report back to the legislature by January 1978.

LD 734 Basic Attainment of Skills in Children Act would provide for a program of basic skills. Mastery of certain skills, along with the successful completion of courses and teacher recommendations, would be requirements for high school graduation. (Pending)

The Commissioner of Education and Cultural Services conducted a series of statewide meetings to obtain a consensus of what Maine citizens feel "should be a partial condition for graduation from secondary school." For the State Department of Education, committees of educators are formulating basic competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics.

MARYLAND

The state department of education has developed the Maryland basic mastery test for reading, administered in 6th, 9th, and 12th grades. This "survival reading test" is also being administered in the fall of each school year to grades 7 and 11 as part of the statewide accountability program. The state board of education and staff of the department of education are in the process of developing a second basic mastery area, mathematics. Under Project Basic, approved by the State Board of Education in January 1977, the state prescribes progressively advanced minimum performance reading levels for all grades.

HB 1462 specifies that students in grades three, seven, and nine through eleven (previously two through seven) who have not met "either a minimum grade level competency" or the minimum reading level prescribed by the state board for the previous grade shall be retained in the current grade or enrolled in a reading assistance program "as part of his or her instructional program."

MASSACHUSETTS

HB 3284. The state board of education would develop examinations for testing competency in the areas of mathematics, social studies, science, English/literature, language, and business. The tests would be reviewed each year and administered at the end of ninth, tenth and eleventh grades. The state board of education would establish passing scores for each test and determine standards for a high school diploma issued by the state.

The Advisory Committee on High School Graduation Requirements has made a preliminary report to the state board of education, outlining basic skill areas in which students should be tested before graduation. The Board approved the report and has set up an official committee to conduct hearings relating to basic skills testing, including mathematics and communications skills.

Local District

Fitchburg. The Fitchburg School Committee has established Project Competency to coordinate assessment of life skills. A skills achievement monitoring system is being used to help teachers keep track of student progress in the basic skills.

MICHIGAN

A criterion-referenced testing program based on competency goals established by the state department of education has been in operation for several years. Test results are made available to school districts. The SDE also works with teacher education institutions in preparing teachers to conduct instruction geared to the state's established minimum competency goals.

An advisory committee is considering use of a bank of items and objectives in basic skills for local school districts.

The State Board of Education has proposed a 12th grade minimal competency test in life skills.

MICHIGAN (Cont'd)

Local Districts

Bellevue Community Schools are exploring development of a basic skills test for 8th graders and for graduating seniors as a requirement for graduation.

In March a committee of the High School Parent Council in East Lansing recommended increased requirements and thorough pre-graduation testing in English, math, science, and social studies. It further recommended a minimum reading level of tenth grade for a diploma.

Lansing School District is working on standards for basic skills and methods of assessment, at junior and high school levels.

Lawton Community Schools are interested in tests for grade-level promotions.

Livonia Public Schools are exploring development of a basic skills test for 8th graders and for graduating seniors as a requirement for graduation.

MINNESOTA

Interest has been expressed in basic skills assessment, especially for grades 1, 3. and 7. Legislation requiring a reading and writing test for grade promotion is being considered.

Local Districts

Minneapolis. Under the Accountability Project Advisory Board, the Basic Skills Committee reviewed the Minneapolis public schools' instructional programs in the basic skills and made recommendations to the board of education in 1974. These recommendations for basic skills testing form the basis for present interest.

St. Paul. The school board is considering appointing a task force of administrators, teachers, students, and parents to study the feasibility of adopting a competency requirement for high school graduation.

White Bear Lake has a basic skills requirement for graduation.

The Mid-State Educational Cooperative is developing minimum competency requirements, among them some on the basic skills of reading, writing, math, and life skills.

Pending:

HF 44 provides that the Commissioner of Education, prior to June 30, 1978, shall establish desirable mnimum standards of reading achievement for pupils completing grades 3, 6, 9, and 12. The bill would also give funding to the state department of education for the development and dissemination of tests and for teachers and consultants.

HF 118 provides for a statewide program of assessment of minimal competency in reading, math, language arts and other general subject areas. It would also provide for a program of remedial aid for the 25 percent of the students who have the greatest need.

MISSISSIPPI

Local Districts

De Soto County is interested in developing evaluation instruments for assessment of the basic skills at the secondary level.

Drew School District introduced competency requirements for grade promotion.

MISSOURI

At the request of the state board of education, the department of elementary and secondary education developed the Missouri Basic Essential Skills Test, a competency test to certify a minimum skill level among its high school graduates. Three forms of the test were pilot tested in the spring of 1977 among 8th graders and will be ready for use in the 1977 school year. After July 1, 1978 all Missouri public school students will be required to take the test at the end of 8th grade. Students not passing the test will have several opportunities to pass the test.

The SBE will determine possible mandatory use of the test for high school graduation after the field tests and pilot programs of the test are completed.

NEBRASKA

Elementary and secondary schools are required to establish a minimum performance level in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Schools must readminister the test until mastery has been demonstrated by all students. An evaluation instrument is available from the SDE for schools wishing to use it.

Local District

Westside Community Schools (District 66) are currently using an outcome evaluation study with some reference to basic skill areas. The first senior class to take minimum competency tests was graduated in June.

NEVADA

The superintendent of public instruction appointed (November 1976) an Advisory Commission for a Competency Based High School Diploma Program to advise the SDE in the selection of competency criteria in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Assembly Bill 400, mandating competency-based testing in Nevada schools, became law July 1, 1977. The Nevada State Board of Education has been working on a Competency-Based High School Diploma Program since January 1976.

The bill requires the testing of students prior to the completion of the third and sixth grades during the next school year. Other dates for standard proficiency examinations are: Grades three, six and nine, 1978-81; and grades three, six, nine and 12, 1981-82 and thereafter.

The State Board of Education has directed the Department of Education staff to complete a detailed analysis of the provisions of A.B. 400 to be reviewed by the Legislative Council Bureau. Department of Education staff will make recommendations in the process of developing minimum competency measurement instruments.

Twelfth-grade students will not be involved until 1982. Minimum competency examinations in arithmetic, reading and writing should be available for use no later than the 1979-80 school year.

NEW JERSEY

A.1736. The original bill, passed in 1975, called for the state to set minimum reading and mathematics standards and for local districts to provide remedial work. Under the amendments, local districts may set lower interim goals and assess students' progress toward those goals. The state board of education acopted regulations requiring local school districts to establish minimum proficiency standards in basic skill areas and provide remediation for children needing it.

An advisory committee is coordinating the activities of eight working committees focusing on key areas involved in the basic skills/minimum standards effort. New minimum basic skills tests in reading and mathematics will be administered to grades 3, 6, 9 and 11 in April of 1978. This program will replace the New Jersey Educational Assessment Program. A committee created by the State Board of Education is examining current statewide requirements for high school graduation.

Local District
Delaware Valley Regional High School is considering a high school level basic skills test.

NEW MEXICO

A Task Force will assist the SDE in developing a plan for improving teaching of basic skills and setting levels of attainment, to be evaluated at certain checkpoints. The final checkpoint will be a graduation requirement. A certificate would be a possible alternative to a diploma for those who do not pass 12th grade evaluation. Remedial work would be provided.

NEW YORK

The board of regents approved (May 1976) a resolution establishing the passing of basic competency tests in reading and mathematics as a requirement for receipt of a high school diploma, beginning with the graduating class of June 1979. Students will be tested at the 9th grade level; those passing the test at that point will be considered as having satisfied that portion of the high school graduation requirements.

Three additional tests were incorporated into the graduation requirements effective in June 1980, in the areas of (1) civics and citizenship, (2) practical science, including health and drug education, and (3) writing and language skills. The state has developed a new Basic Competency Test in Writing Skills which all students must pass to obtain a high school diploma.

The new writing skills test was first administered in October 1976, and will be administered again in January and June of 1978. Schools having students who fail the new skills test will be given remedial work.

Local District
Mamaroneck Public Schools are developing criterion-referenced tests to evaluate the effectiveness of the new basic skills programs.

NEW YORK (cont'd)

New York City. The Board of Education is developing minimum performance standards. The school system is considering raising the reading requirement for high school graduation from the present 8th grade level to 9th grade. A special pilot program in basic writing skills will begin at the tenth grade level at 15 public high schools and six nonpublic high schools in September 1977. The program, designed to encourage and improve the expository writing skills of the secondary level students, is titled WEDGE (Writing Every Day Generates Excellence).

NORTH CAROLINA

Pending: S DRS4507, a bill that would provide for a high school graduation competency test. The Governor, upon recommendation of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction would appoint a Competency Test Commission on or before July 1, 1977. After the adoption of tests and minimum graduation standards by the State Board of Education tests would be administered to all eleventh grade students in the public schools in the spring of 1979. Students who fail to attain the required minimum standard for graduation in the eleventh grade would be given additional opportunities to take the test in the twelfth grade.

NORTH DAKOTA

HB 1460 would prescribe high school diplomas and allow diplomas to indicate completion of an optional proficiency test.

OHIO

SB170, passed in 1975, mandates assessment (matrix sampling) in the schools, using instruments developed by the state education department. The tests involve reading tests for grades 4, 8, 12, and math and English composition. HB6, recently introduced, specifies that the state administer competency-based tests in grades 3, 6, 9, and 11.

Local Districts

Cincinnati. A citizens' task force is considering basic skills and their assessment. The use of examination for grade-to-grade promotion or at selected points is being considered.

Columbus. The superintendent has proposed basic skills assessment to the school board.

Dayton. A 9th grade testing program is in operation. The school district is working on a basic skills requirement for the 11th and 12th grades.

Mentor Public Schools. The Board of Education has required successful completion of competency exams in the basic skills as a high school graduation requirement.

OREGON

The state board of education in 1972 established a new high school graduation policy requiring school districts to ensure that minimum standards in locally defined measurable competencies, in addition to course credit and other requirements, were met by their graduating seniors, beginning with the class of 1978. The 1974 revised "Oregon Minimum Standards for Public Schools" extended the concept of competency-based education to elementary and junior high schools.

Revisions in 1976 require school districts to verify that students have minimal competencies in the basic skills in order to receive a high school diploma. Districts will assess the reading, writing, and computing skills in 3 programs of their choice beginning with the class of 1978. Assessments in additional areas, as identified by local districts, will be required by 1981. Districts may choose to use the areas of personal development, social responsibility, and career development, or may develop their own.

An Educational Development Resource Center has been set up to provide districts with assistance in implementing the competency-based requirements.

PENNSYLVANIA

As part of an overall plan to review the quality of education in the state, the state board of education has developed Project 81. Under Project 81, goals of education are being redefined. School programs will be revised to reflect those goals, and new requirements will be set for graduating students. Such requirements will be based on evidence of minimum competencies in basic skills in four life roles, in addition to courses taken, credits, and Carnegie units. Twelve model districts have been selected to work with the state in this effort. Project 81 states that by 1978-79 the model districts will revise graduation requirements and implement a revised assessment program. The state board of education will revise curriculum regulations, based on the work of the 12 model districts and the department of education.

Revisions are being made in the statewide assessment program--an enlarged test for verbal and math areas, and a new test in written expression, with emphasis on reading comprehension and computational and problem-solving areas.

Local District

Lancaster school district has developed an Applied Basic Skills program. Philadelphia School District administered a test of functional literacy to public high school seniors in October 1976. The board of education plans to test for basic skills. Philadelphia is one of several hundred school districts in the U.S. and Canada working cooperatively on the development of a program for basic skills assessment.

RHODE ISLAND

The Statewide Assessment Program eventually will be based on performance indicators. The state has developed basic skills and performance indicators with the expectation that assessment will be devised at the local level.

RHODE ISLAND (cont'd)

State regulations for the Local Planning Assessment Program (LPAP) are being used on a provisional basis in 1977.

The state is interested in constructing objective-based tests and is exploring the possibility of generating an extensive data bank geared to state instructional objectives relating to basic skills.

Local District.
The Alternative Learning Project in Providence involves minimal competency activity.

TEXAS

The state board of education adopted, in March 1975, long-range objectives pertaining to "attainment of essential knowledge, skills, and competencies" in reading and math to be required of high school graduates. Minimal reading and math competencies have been formulated by the Texas Education Agency and the 20 regional education service centers, following a series of meetings with lay representatives and educators. Several plans for implementation of a basic skills program will be considered by the state legislature in 1977.

UTAH

The State Board of Education adopted a new policy that requires students to meet minimum standards of achievement including demonstration of competency in some subjects in order to graduate from high school.

VERMONT

In July 1976, the state board of education approved a list of 51 competencies that will be required for a high school diploma beginning with the class of 1981. The list covers reading, writing, speaking, listening, and mathematics. Testing is not mandated. School districts are in the process of implementation.

VIRGINIA

The state has mandated minimun competency requirements for several levels and graduation. Under HB 256 (Standards of Quality Act), each school division is to give instructional priority to developing the reading, communications, and mathematics skills of all students, with particular attention to the primary grades (K-3) and the intermediate grades (4-6). Remedial work for low-achieving students will be provided.

By September of 1978, the state board of education, in cooperation with local districts, will be required to establish specific minimum statewide educational objectives and a uniform statewide test in reading, communications and mathematics skills. After July 1, 1978, students will be required to demonstrate basic competency in those skills for high school graduation.

VIRGINIA (cont'd)

Guidelines are being prepared to help school divisions meet the high school graduation competencies.

Local District.
Greenville County has adopted minimum graduation standards.

WASHINGTON

The question of minimal competency testing is being given consideration by the state department of education.

WEST VIRGINIA

Local District
Kanawha County, Charleston has several committees studying minimal competency issues.

WISCONSIN

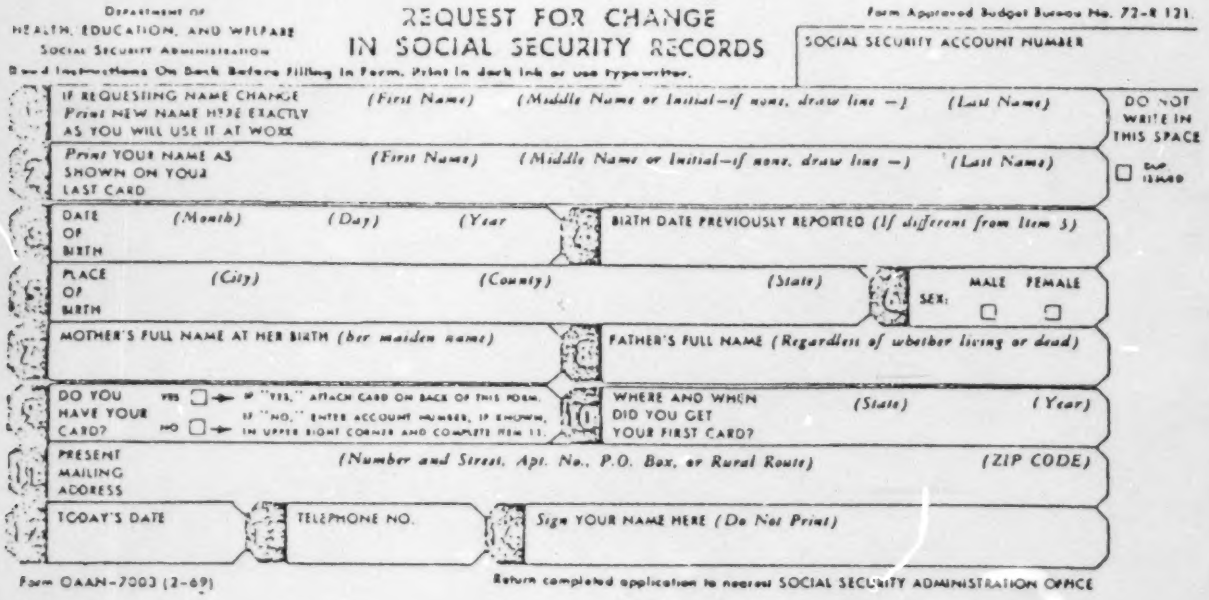
State Department of Education. The state superintendent has appointed a "blue ribbon committee" to study minimal standards for local districts and make recommendations on the department of public instruction's role in competency based education.

Local Districts
Manitowoc Public School District has adopted a proficiency testing requirement.
Sparta and Milwaukee schools are also working on minimal competency requirements.

BASIC SKILLS SAMPLE TEST QUESTIONS

Reading

Question 7 refers to the following form.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

REQUEST FOR CHANGE IN SOCIAL SECURITY RECORDS

Form Approved Budget Bureau No. 72-R 121.

Read Instructions On Back Before Filling In Form. Print in dark ink or use typewriter.

SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBER

1 IF REQUESTING NAME CHANGE Print NEW NAME HERE EXACTLY AS YOU WILL USE IT AT WORK (First Name) (Middle Name or Initial—if none, draw line —) (Last Name)

2 Print YOUR NAME AS SHOWN ON YOUR LAST CARD (First Name) (Middle Name or Initial—if none, draw line —) (Last Name)

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE — CARD ISSUED ☐

3 DATE OF BIRTH (Month) (Day) (Year)

BIRTH DATE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (If different from item 3)

4 PLACE OF BIRTH (City) (County) (State)

SEX: MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐

5 MOTHER'S FULL NAME AT HER BIRTH (her maiden name)

FATHER'S FULL NAME (Regardless of whether living or dead)

6 DO YOU HAVE YOUR CARD? YES ☐ → If "YES," ATTACH CARD ON BACK OF THIS FORM. NO ☐ → If "NO," ENTER ACCOUNT NUMBER, IF KNOWN, IN UPPER RIGHT CORNER AND COMPLETE ITEM 11.

WHERE AND WHEN DID YOU GET YOUR FIRST CARD? (State) (Year)

7 PRESENT MAILING ADDRESS (Number and Street, Apt. No., P.O. Box, or Rural Route) (ZIP CODE)

8 TODAY'S DATE

TELEPHONE NO.

Sign YOUR NAME HERE (Do Not Print)

Form OAAN-7003 (2-69)

Return completed application to nearest SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7. On which part of the form should you write where you were born?

(A) 3 (B) 4 (C) 5 (D) 6

Question 10 refers to the following bus schedule.

MIDDLETOWN TO SPRINGDALE

Leave Middletown	Arrive Springdale
6:15 a.m.	7:10 a.m.
7:30 a.m.	8:45 a.m.
8:10 a.m.	9:25 a.m.
9:05 a.m.	10:15 a.m.
11:35 a.m.	12:40 p.m.
1:20 p.m.	2:35 p.m.
3:15 p.m.	4:20 p.m.
5:00 p.m.	6:05 p.m.
6:30 p.m.	7:45 p.m.

10. The bus that leaves Middletown at 11:35 a.m. arrives in Springdale at

(A) 12:40 p.m.

(B) 2:35 p.m.

(C) 4:20 p.m.

(D) 6:05 p.m.

Writing Skills

Directions for Questions 5-8: In each of the following sentences, find the error in punctuation or capitalization. No sentence has more than one error.

7. When he thought I wasn't looking, my playful, brother would take a bite
A B C
of my chocolate cake.
D

Directions for Questions 17-18: Choose the best answer to each question.

17. My music teacher thinks that Marian Anderson sings - - - - - - - - - any other contralto he has ever heard.

(A) more well than

(B) better than

(C) the most good of

(D) more better over

Mathematics

7. The reading shown on the scale above is

(A) 6.8

(B) 7.1

(C) 7.2

(D) 8.2

18. Mrs. Wong has to be at work at 8:45. If she allows 1 hour and 20 minutes to get there, what is the latest she can leave home?

(A) A quarter to 8

(B) 5 after 8

(C) Half past 7

(D) 25 after 7